

cc Melissa Miller-Henson

October 28, 2007

John McCamman
Interim Director, California Department of Fish and Game
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Susan Golding
Chair, Marine Life Protection Act Blue Ribbon Task Force
The Golding Group, Inc.
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San Diego, California, USA
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Dear Mr. McCamman and Ms. Golding,

This letter concerns an oversight in the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process for the North Coast Region that, in my view, is a threat to successful implementation. The remedy is simple, if you take action quickly.

The MLPA Master Plan (rev. April 13, 2007) states that MLPA is a public-private partnership. The authors use the words 'partnership' and 'stakeholders' over 100 times in relation to the success of the act, design, monitoring, and enforcement. Clearly the authors believe that partnerships and stakeholder involvement are key success factors.

It is essential to involve all potential stakeholders at the outset to develop plans for MPAs that enlist the support of the community and serve local conservation needs. (page 24)

Sadly, if the two Gualala meetings are an indication, the people who have had the most impact on North Coast conservation historically—the private steward-landowners—have been excluded from the stakeholder group. Families with coastal land, who have partnered with California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) wardens for decades to protect marine life are lumped together with the public. They do not have a seat at the table. As a result, local knowledge, local eyes and ears for monitoring intratidal areas, and natural partners for enforcement are ignored. **It's a waste. And it will lead to failure.**

I've lived on the coast for more than 50 years. Commercial abalone gangs and itinerant divers have illegally taken hundreds of abalone, leaving piles of shells behind on our land. We have found people gathering other species for personal and commercial use. On the property my family has owned for over 80 years, we began to enforce no trespassing laws rigorously. On minus tides, members of the family are out before dawn on the highway and on the rocks. These procedures have been in place for decades and they have worked. The result is thriving populations of pinnipeds, mollusks, and black abalone, crab, sea slugs, starfish, rockfish, octopi, and exotic creatures which are rare elsewhere. It would be a mistake to presume chance, unique geology, or state regulations were the dominant factors in these results. **It on its own does not have the resources to maintain this type of biodiversity.** Ironically, the family now

manages a marine reserve. Under the MLPA, our hands may be tied in maintaining these natural values.

What makes the Blue Ribbon Task Force believe that “coastal tourism businesses and users of marine resources, such as fishers, divers, kayakers, researchers, underwater photographers, and boaters” will be better stewards than those who have protected this land for decades? Many of these interests do not have a long-term relationship with or personal stake in this North Coast land. Yet these are the “stakeholders” who dominated the process we observed in Gualala. And this is how the Master Plan defines stakeholder.

I’ve learned through many years as a consultant that great designs often fail in implementation. Without local steward-landowners at the table, the MLPA simply paints a bull’s-eye on areas of great biodiversity, touts unenforceable principles, and undermines ongoing stewardship.

You have the ability to change this dynamic in the MLPA process. I and members of the Ratcliff family urge you to appoint several steward-landowner interests to the North Coast MLPA stakeholder groups as soon as possible. We urge you to meet with us to discuss the consequences of the current direction and steps to remedy the situation.

With great concern,

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